Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc.

Investing in our children's future since 1968

The Ultimate Nanny Guide

Finding and working with a caregiver in your home

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The Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc.

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Considering In-Home Care?

In-home child care is usually referred to as having a nanny, au pair or mother's helper who may or may not live in your home with you.

There are many advantages to this type of arrangement:

- It's usually the most flexible kind of child care. You determine hours of work, payment and job responsibilities, as well as meal, playtime and activity schedules.
- If your children are sick, or disabled, they can be cared for in the comfort of their home

This may work well for you if you have more than one child or an erratic work schedule, work late or weekend hours, travel a great deal, or commute long distances.

However, you should also consider:

- When used full time or close to it, it is often the most expensive child care arrangement
- This type of care is not regulated by the state or federal government. That means there are not any mandatory training, education, credential or background check requirements or standards.
- You're considered an employer and required to fulfill a variety of legal/tax obligations
- Your children could become isolated unless playdates and other activities are arranged

This guide will give you information to help you make an informed decision.
To discuss your options with an experienced, caring child care specialist,
call (914) 761-3456 x140

Hours:
Monday 9-5.
Tuesday 9-7.
Wed, Thurs, Fri 9-5
and by email/appointment

Start your child care search several months before you need it, as it may take a while, and the first person you pick may not be the right fit.

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To Find an In-Home Caregiver

Follow these steps:

1. Determine your needs, and define basic job responsibilities and salary/benefits
2. Decide how you will conduct your search (Agency? Word of mouth?)
3. Interview candidates and hire a caregiver
4. Have a trial period
5. Ensure you're meeting your employer/tax responsibilities

1. Needs and Job Responsibilities

Consider:

- Live in or live out?
- Is a driver's license necessary?
- Do you want housework to get done, as well?
- What characteristics and qualifications are important?
- Do your children have any special requirements or needs?
- What salary and benefits will you offer?

We recommend writing up a job description, as it will help you to consider all of these things.

In-home caregivers are called many different things, including nanny, au pair, housekeeper, babysitter. While these terms have specific meanings in the child care industry, they are often used interchangeably in informal settings. If you are looking for a person who has received formal education and training in child care, or who can perform specific duties, make sure you state that explicitly in ads, during interviews, etc.

Salary and benefits

If you are considering hiring a nanny, there are many variables that need to be taken into account when deciding what salary to offer, including:

- Hours (part-time and live-out nannies typically receive higher hourly wages than full-time or live-in since they get fewer benefits)
- Working days (typical schedule, or a lot of late nights and weekends?)
- Experience and/or education
- Number of children
- Responsibilities (just child care, or cooking, laundry, errands, housekeeping, etc?)
- Cost of living in your area

Benefits being offered should also be considered in the nanny's salary. Some employers offer:

- Health care (partial or full), dental and/or vision plan
- Paid holidays, vacation days, sick days
- Bonuses
- 401k
- Use of the family car
- Paid travel and expenses on family vacations
- Reimbursement for training/continuing education allowance

How much should you pay?

- Full time live-out nannies earn between $400-$1,200 per week
- Full time live-in nannies earn between $300-$1,200 per week
- Some employers pay their nannies by the hour. This can range from minimum wage to $25.00 per hour; average for New York is $17.80. The more education and experience, the higher the salary, typically.
- You may need to consider overtime wages, and benefit-related payments, like an annual bonus
- You can check the International Nanny Association (INA) Salary & Benefits Survey at www.nanny.org

Important Tip:

A nanny is covered under the Fair Labor Standards Act and must be paid at least minimum wage, which is $11/hour in Westchester County, NY through 12/31/18.

Hours worked by non-residential employees ("live-out" nannies) in excess of 40 hours in a payroll week must be compensated time and a half. For residential employees ("live-in" nannies), this overtime rate applies to all time over 44 hours in a payroll week. Please contact the New York State Department of Labor (www.labor.state.ny.us) for more information on this law.

2. Conduct Your Search

You can use a licensed employment agency, in-home/nanny agency, or a government-authorized au pair placement agency, or you can locate a nanny on your own – handling your own advertising, networking and screening. Of course, there are pros and cons for each method.

A placement agency often:

- Makes for a shorter overall search process, feeds you applicants without much legwork on your end, handles the contracts, and provides guidance on how to ease a foreign caregiver's transition into her new home

Also consider:

- Agency fees can be expensive, and you will rely on an agency's applicant screening process when it may not be as strict as you would like

On the other hand, recruiting independently means:

- No agency fee, the search is more personalized, and there's more flexibility in setting salary

But, handling the search yourself:

- Can be time consuming, and advertising costs can quickly accrue. Also, you may need to confirm the citizenship/work eligibility status of applicants.

For your convenience, a list of placement agencies is available from the Child Care Council, by calling (914) 761-3456 x140 or emailing referrals@cccwny.org.

Important Tip:

Regardless of what an agency tells you,
your child's well-being is ultimately in your hands.
Always, always check references on your own!

To request **a criminal background check** on a potential caregiver, call the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services at (518) 485-7675. For more information, go to: ocfs.ny.gov/main/publications/Pub4628.pdf

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If you decide to use an agency, please note that each kind offers different services. Ask a lot of questions!

First, consider:

- Do they conduct a lengthy interview to determine your requirements?
- Do they verify identity, education, experience, credentials?
- What are the agency's procedures for ensuring a good match between you and a caregiver?
- Do they make suggestions to help you clarify your expectations?
- Does the representative listen to you and seem to care about your situation?
- How long has the agency been in business?
- Do they perform state and county criminal checks, state sex offender registry searches, and driving record inquiries? How often do they repeat them?

Questions about fees and policies:

- What are the total charges for the agency's services?
- What are typical salaries for caregivers they place?
- What is the refund/replacement policy? Is it available in writing?

Questions about recruitment and placement:

- What are the agency's standards and procedures for recruiting and screening caregivers?
- Who are the recruiters the agency employs? What is their training and background?
- How will the agency work with you and/or the caregiver once a placement is made?
- Does the agency have a track record for successful placements?
- What are the age requirements for caregivers?
- What kind of education/training is required for caregivers? Do they have CPR and First Aid training?
- Are background checks conducted? If so, what do these checks cover?
- Can you obtain copies of written references?
- Can you obtain reference names and phone numbers to confirm the information provided?
- Does the agency provide references from successful placements?

Important Tip:

Get all policies and promises in writing.

If you are interested in an au pair, there are additional considerations.

Questions specifically for au pair agencies:

- Does the organization automatically match you with an au pair, or are you allowed to review applications and interview applicants on the telephone?
- Can you obtain references on your own?
- Are there restrictions on families? E.g. Do they accept single parents? Families with newborns?
- What if the family and the au pair don't get along? Is there a refund schedule? A replacement policy? Do you have to pay additional fees for the replacement?
- Does the program offer trained counselors to work with the au pairs and the host families, or just volunteers? What are their responsibilities?
- How often is the counselor required to have contact or activities with the au pairs and host families?
- Is there a choice of arrival date and airport for pickup?
- Are there current host families in your area that you can contact?
- Is there always someone available to speak with if problems arise, or are office hours limited?

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Locating a Caregiver on Your Own

Families concerned about the cost of agency placement fees or who like the idea of selecting from a larger pool can consider recruiting a caregiver on their own.

Ways to find someone:

- Word of mouth (in person or via social media)
  - Ask your friends if they know a great caregiver looking for a new job
- Advertisements/postings in newspapers, or on bulletin boards at organizations listed below
  - Provide a thorough job description
  - Do not include any personal information – consider a new email address just for the search
- Online resources
  - Remember, there is often no screening process for nannies/caregivers who post their profiles on online sites. Their identity, experience, education, etc. may not be verified or validated.

There are thousands of matching sites to choose from. For your convenience, a list of sites is available from the Child Care Council. Call (914) 761-3456 x140 or email referrals@cccwny.org.

- Networking
  - Talk to the staff of community facilities, like:
    - high schools, colleges, or universities
    - nurses in local pediatrician offices
    - churches, synagogues, religious organizations
    - state and local employment offices
    - senior citizens' centers
    - women's centers
    - YMCAs and health clubs
    - Local elementary schools, child care centers (substitute teachers)

If you are seeking part-time or summer care, colleges may be a good resource. Contact information is available from the Child Care Council. Call (914) 761-3456 x140 or email referrals@cccwny.org.

Important Tip:

No matter how much you trust the person or organization who refers a caregiver to you, you must still do your own due diligence. Interview carefully, pay for a thorough background check, ask for proof of certifications (like CPR), and check multiple references.

Never assume an applicant has been completely truthful or that any of these things were done by someone else.

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Be safe!

If starting your search online:

- Trust your instincts and be thorough. People can misrepresent themselves online.
- Use caution when sharing personal information
    - Provide limited information; if possible, avoid providing your full name
    - Do not provide your home address to individuals
    - Do not provide identifying information about your child (i.e. name, age, DOB, or what they look like)
    - If applicable, review the privacy and confidentiality policies on the websites you are utilizing to search

Once you have a list of candidates:
Arranging to meet in person is an important part of the interviewing process. Choose the time and place wisely. You may want to consider meeting in a public place and having a family member or friend join you.

3. Conduct Interviews

In order to save time, **interview all applicants by phone** before you meet with them. Ask questions that require more than just a yes or no answer, so you can gauge their personality, responsiveness and enthusiasm.

Once you feel comfortable with the applicants on the phone, we suggest that you **check at least three references before arranging an interview**. Depending on your comfort level at that point, consider having a first meeting in a public place with a friend or family member present. Again, limit the amount of personal information you share.

Questions to ask an applicant's references:

- What did you like best about the person?
- What did you like least? Did you have any concerns?
- What is one thing you would have liked to be different about this person?
- Do you feel your child was comfortable with this caregiver?
- How much initiative did she take?
- Why did she leave, and on what terms?
- Would you use this person again if you needed a caregiver?

Possible interview questions
Beyond the basics (training, skills, interests, availability, salary) here are some interview questions that may really help you get to know a candidate:

- Why are you looking for a job taking care of children?
- What do you like most about children? Least?
- How would you respond when the baby/child cries?
- How would you feed the baby/child?
- How would you soothe the baby/child for a nap?
- How do you think toilet training should be handled?
- How would you respond to a temper tantrum?
- What activities would you plan for a rainy day?
- Create an emergency situation and ask how the applicant would handle it.

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Before you make a final decision, do your research

- Use Internet search engines (e.g. www.google.com)
- Check all references provided (at least three)
- Perform a background check
    - Kieran's Law permits perspective employers access to information such as Criminal History Reports, NYS Dept of Motor Vehicle Records, Education Records, and Credit History Information. For more information on Kieran's law, go to ocfs.ny.gov/main/publications/Pub4628.pdf

Be on the lookout for any signs something just isn't right:

- Someone you never met requests money or any type of financial assistance, before any agreement or decision is made
- You're not comfortable with the pace the other person is setting; they are speeding up the process
- The person has a sudden personal crisis and solicits you to provide assistance
- Their information is inconsistent
- They do not answer specific questions; tend to be vague
- They want you to compromise your principles
- They have excuses why they can't provide references

Important Tip:

If you have any uneasy feelings about a person, do not hire her. If you are uncomfortable, the chances are your child will be too. You may need to interview many caregivers before you find the right person. Do not get discouraged. Take your time; it will pay off in the long run!

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4. Have a Trial Period

Once you decide on an applicant, you want to have a trial period of at least two weeks, if not more. This should provide enough time for your new nanny and your family to connect before you return to work or start to leave your nanny alone with your child. The nanny needs to know this is a good fit for her just as much as it's a good fit for your family.

It is not unusual, in these first few weeks, to determine that things won't work out. So, be sure to keep information of other potential caregiver, and be kind and considerate when you tell them you've hired someone else, just in case.

5. Be a responsible employer

Once you hire a nanny, you are an employer. You then have certain legal obligations to fulfill. You will be required to pay social security and other employer taxes. You should contact your accountant or the IRS (www.IRS.gov) for specific information.

For information on household and/or payroll tax services:

Nanny tax, Inc.
750 Third Ave
New York, NY 10017
(212) 891-6068 or 1-888-NANNYTAX
www.nannytax.com

Home/Work Solutions
2 Pidgeon Hill Drive #300
Sterling, VA 20165
1-800-NANITAX
www.4nannytaxes.com

Additional Resources

For information on education and/or training programs, contact:

1. Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc.
   313 Central Park Ave, Scarsdale NY 10583
   (914) 761-3456 x113
   www.childcarewestchester.org
2. National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
   1313 L Street, Suite 500, Washington, DC, 20019
   (800) 424-2460
   www.naeyc.org
3. International Nanny Association
   PO Box 1299, Hyannis, MA 02601
   (888) 878-1477
   www.nanny.org